

MEMORANDUM

TO: Mayor Craig Brown and Members of Council

CC: City Manager Office, Executive Leadership Team, City Attorney Office

FROM: Sally Bakko, Director of Policy and Governmental Relations

DATE: February 3, 2023

RE: Legislative Report: Austin and Washington Updates

Please find below updates on legislative activities in Austin and Washington. (*To access links below, control+click on link.*)

Gulf Coast Protection District (GCPD) Update

This week I participated in a fly-in visit to Washington, D.C. to advocate for funding for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) Coastal Texas Storm Barrier Protection System project. I had the opportunity to meet with the following individuals

- **Rep. Brian Babin (R-TX-36)** who is a member of the House Transportation & Infrastructure Committee and sits on the Water Resources Subcommittee, and his staff. Rep. Babin mentioned he and his Washington staff would like to visit the project areas within the GCPD jurisdiction, possibly during the March recess.
- **Rep. Keith Self (R-TX-3) and Rep. Morgan Luttrell (R-TX-8)**, new members of the Texas delegation, and their staff were briefed on the Coastal Texas project and the economic supply chain protections.
- **Rep. Randy Weber (R-TX-14)** - I met with William Christian, Deputy Chief of Staff and Legislative Director, to update him on our advocacy work for funding at the state and federal level. Rep. Weber may join Rep. Babin when he visits GCPD jurisdiction areas in March. I was fortunate that Rep. Weber was on my plane returning to Houston giving me a chance for a brief conversation.
- **Michael Connor, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Assistant Secretary of the Army for Civil Works** - I joined GCPD Board President Michel Bechtel, Board Vice President Bob Mitchell, and Board Member Commissioner Billy Combs to provide briefing materials on the Coastal Texas Program, GCPD Information Sheet, and the national factsheet and state-specific factsheets for 16 states (including Texas) that I prepared to outline the economic supply chain implications for each state and the Coastal Texas project protections. Key points:
 - Mr. Connor concurred the economic supply chain factsheet presentation provided an effective demonstration the national benefit of the project.
 - Mr. Connor observed the GCPD, USACE-Galveston District and USACE Headquarters need to work closely to identify ready to go phases of the project (taking into consideration supplemental environment study requirements) that can be completed while advancing work on the larger “economic engine” portion of the project which is the gate system.
 - GCPD Board President Mayor Bechtel advised Mr. Connor that the double-dune and beach system along Bolivar Peninsula and West Galveston Island and portions of the eco-restoration project are good candidates to demonstrate such accomplishments.

- **Andrew Petrisin, Supply Chain Advisor to U.S. Department of Transportation Port and Supply Chain Envoy General Stephen Lyons, Office for Special Envoy for Ports & Supply Chains** – new to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Coastal Storm Surge Barrier System recently authorized by Congress, I briefed Mr. Petrisin on the project background, current status, and economic supply chain implications and protection benefits provided by the project. I provided the GCPD Information Sheet, and the national factsheet and state-specific factsheets for 16 states (including Texas) that I prepared to outline the economic supply chain implications for each state and the Coastal Texas project protections. Acknowledgement from the Port Envoy for Ports & Supply Chains recognizing the supply chain disruption threats posed by major storms hitting the Houston/Galveston area would be invaluable for raising urgency for funding from Congress.

The [Gulf Coast Protection District](#) Board of Directors will meet at 10:00 am on Wednesday, February 8, 2023. The meeting will be held at the Bay Area Community Center, 5002 E. NASA Parkway in Seabrook ([view agenda](#)). A livestream of the meeting will be broadcast online at <https://www.gcpdtexas.com/live-stream>.

San Jacinto Region 6 Regional Flood Planning Group Update

The [San Jacinto Region 6 Regional Flood Planning Group](#) meet at the Harris-Galveston Subsidence District, 1660 West Bay Area Blvd., Friendswood, from 9:00 am to 12:00 pm on Thursday, February 9, 2023. You can access agenda and meeting materials [here](#). Meetings are hybrid, so if you would like to participate online, please register at: <https://bit.ly/3WYgSs6> for login information.

Austin Update

88th Texas Legislature – Regular Session Key Dates

November 14, 2022 – Prefiling of bills by legislators begins.

January 10, 2023 – Texas Legislature Convenes

March 10, 2023 – 60-Day Bill Filing Deadline

May 29, 2023 – Adjournment Sine Die (140th day or 20 weeks)

Texas Legislature News Highlights

- Senate Finance Committee hearings on the 2024/25 biennium budget, S.B. 1, will begin in earnest the week of February 6th, delayed due to the winter storm freeze impacting Austin. Hearings scheduled for agencies that may be of interest include:
 - **Thursday, February 9th** – Commission on Fire Protection, Commission on Law Enforcement, and Special Provisions relating to Public Safety and Criminal Justice Agencies
 - **Monday, February 13th** – General Land Office (Gulf Coast Protection District has been invited to testify), Commission on Environmental Quality, Parks and Wildlife Department, and Water Development Board.
 - **Tuesday, February 14th** – Department of Transportation, Department of Housing and Community Affairs
 - **Wednesday, February 15th** – Public Utility Commission, Department of Insurance, State Office of Administrative Hearings
- House Appropriations Committee hearings will begin once committee assignments are announced by House Speaker Dade Phelan.

Texas Legislature Pre-Filed Bills of Interest

Attached is a memorandum providing summaries of bills that may be of interest to Galveston. The bills are organized in the following categories:

- Public Safety
- Community and Economic Development
- Personnel
- Open Government
- Elections
- Other Finance and Administration
- Transportation
- Utilities and Environment

Texas General Land Office Coastal Management and CEPRA Program Workshops

The Texas General Land Office has announced a series of 2023 Coastal Management Program (CMP) and Coastal Erosion Planning and Response Act (CEPRA) Program Outreach Workshops. The purpose of these joint workshops is to provide information on their funding programs, review the online application portal, and allow potential applicants to discuss project ideas with staff. A convenient workshop location is:

- League City Workshop – Thursday, March 2, 2023 8:00 am – 12:00 pm Johnnie Arolfo Civic Center
400 W Walker St League City, TX 77573

For other workshop locations and registration, [click here](#). To see the application due dates, [click here](#).

Texas Awarded \$363.8 Million BOOT Program Funds to Improve Broadband

The Texas Broadband Development Office (BDO) will receive \$363.8 million in federal Coronavirus Capital Projects Fund grants to increase access to affordable, reliable high-speed internet for over 150,000 Texas homes and businesses. The funds will support the BDO's Bringing Online Opportunities to Texas (BOOT) program. The BOOT program is a competitive grant program designed to fund last-mile broadband infrastructure projects to bring reliable internet service to eligible unserved and underserved areas across the state. The [Texas Broadband Development Map](#) will determine eligibility. BOOT grants will provide funding to qualified projects designed to connect locations that meet specific criteria (see [announcement](#) from Comptroller Glenn Hegar). The BOOT program will begin accepting applications for broadband expansion projects in spring 2023.

Bridge Replacement Rehabilitation, Preservation, Protection, and Construction Program

U.S. DOT recently announced the availability of \$26.5 billion in funding for the Bridge Replacement, Rehabilitation, Preservation, Protection, and Construction Program (Bridge Formula Program). The program will provide funding to state, local, and tribal governments to help replace, repair, and improve over 15,000 highway and local off-system bridges across the country. The BFP will fund 100% of any off-system bridge projects. TxDOT has communicated to the Texas Municipal League that it will waive the standard 10% matching requirement for local governments for *all* off-system bridge projects let from Summer 2023 through FY 2026. More information about the program, eligibility, and use of BFP funds can be found [here](#).

TWDB [Water Loss, Use, and Conservation Webinar](#) -Tuesday, February 21, from 8:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. – [Register now](#)

The Water Loss, Use, and Conservation (WLUC) webinar, part of the TWDB's Technical Assistance for Water Loss Control program, looks at the TWDB's water use survey, water loss audit, and data from a water stewardship perspective. The WLUC webinars are provided at no cost to participants and are approved for four hours of continuing education for licensed water operators through the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality.

Washington Update

U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) RAISE Application Deadline February 28th

Applications for the DOT Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity (RAISE) Grant Program are due by **10:59:59 PM CST on February 28, 2023**. RAISE grants provide funding for surface transportation infrastructure projects to improve safety, environmental sustainability, quality of life, mobility and community connectivity, economic competitiveness, and opportunity, including tourism, state of good repair, partnership and collaboration, and innovation. For more information about the RAISE program, please see DOT's RAISE program [application instructions](#) and [webinar series](#).

Reports of Interest

[Texas cities debate costly infrastructure investments in age of extreme weather](#)

Texas Tribune, February 3, 2023

[The Fight Over Property Tax Cuts in the Texas Legislature](#)

Texas Tribune, January 31, 2023

[What to Know About New Federal Broadband Program](#)

Pew Charitable Trusts Institute, January 9, 2023

[GAO Issues and Seeks Comments on Draft Updates to "Yellow Book," the Preeminent Standards for Government Auditing](#)

January 30, 2023